

# Vomiting

While there can be medical causes for vomiting that need to be addressed, this can also occur from hairballs or eating too fast. This handout will only address the latter two, so if you have questions on other types of vomiting, please contact us.

## Types of Vomit:

- **Liquid.** If your cat is vomiting up just liquid, or mostly digested food on a regular basis, this is a cause for concern, and we recommend bringing your cat into the clinic so we can investigate the possible causes and treat them.
- **Spaghetti or rice.** If your cat is vomiting up things that look like spaghetti or rice, and you know your cat has not just eaten either one, then these are intestinal parasites. Please call us, and we can get the proper de-worming for your cat.
- **Hairballs.** If your cat is vomiting up what looks kind of like a formed stool, but on closer examination is made up of hair, these are hairballs.
- **Undigested food.** If your cat is vomiting up food that looks like it hasn't even been digested yet, and this is happening while your cat is eating or shortly after, this is a result of eating too much too fast.

## Hairballs:

- These happen from your cat grooming themselves or another animal in the house, and swallowing the hair, which is normal. There are some things you can do though to minimize hairballs.
  - **Lubrication.** By giving your cat a petroleum jelly based lubricant, you can basically lubricate your cat's stomach to help the hairballs slide into the intestines, and therefore come out in the stool rather than being vomited.
    - **Commercial preparations.** Some of the commercial preparations have names like Laxatone, Hairball Laxative, Petromalt, etc. These are generally malt, chicken, or fish flavored. You can feed them directly to your cat, or you can smear them on the top of your cat's paw with the goal that your cat will groom them off and ingest them that way.
    - **Petroleum jelly.** You can also just give straight petroleum jelly or Vaseline. Just make sure that if you do that there is nothing else added to it. For this, you can give a teaspoon daily either by mouth or by smearing on the top of your cat's paw to groom off.
  - **Fiber.** Fiber will help your cat's stomach to more effectively digest the hair, thereby passing it through the intestinal tract and coming out in the stool, rather than being vomited. The only time you would not want to give additional fiber is if your cat

suffered from megacolon or end stage constipation. There are a few ways to give your cat fiber.

- **Hairball diets.** These tend to be higher in fiber content than other foods.
- **Canned pumpkin.** You can give your cat a tablespoon of canned pumpkin daily as a fiber supplement if they will eat it. Surprisingly, a lot of cats like canned pumpkin. Just keep the unused portion in the refrigerator in between.
- **Metamucil or Benefiber.** A teaspoon of either of these can be mixed in moist food daily to increase your cat's fiber intake. Most cats will eat the Benefiber more readily as it is less grainy and tasteless, but either one will work.
- **Fur reduction.** You can also reduce your cat's hairballs by reducing the amount of fur that they can ingest. There are two ways to do this.
  - **Shaving.** You can take your cat to a groomer and have them shaved, or if your cat is very tolerant and you feel that they will let you, you can purchase animal clippers and shave your cat yourself.
    - If your cat goes out doors, do not do this when it is cold outside.
    - If you shave your cat yourself, please use caution so as not to accidentally cut your cat's skin.
  - **Combing.** An average cat comb or brush will not significantly reduce your cat's overall fur volume. But there are two ways to reduce your cat's fur by combing.
    - A groomer has special combs that will thin out your cat's fur significantly. Once every 6 weeks is usually sufficient for this.
    - Furminators. These are combs that have very short close together teeth that are very effective at removing a cat's excess fur and thinning it out, preventing hairballs before they start. They are not sharp, and do not cut the fur. Just be cautious not to use too frequently as you can overgroom and thin too much of the undercoat.

#### **Eating too fast:**

- Some cats will ingest their food so quickly that their stomach cannot handle it, and the food is vomited back up a few minutes later mostly undigested. There are a few things that you can try to minimize this.
  - **Slowing down the rate of eating.** If you can slow down how fast your cat eats, then this can help to minimize bingeing and purging.
    - **Golf balls.** Whether you are feeding dry food or wet food, this can work, but it may be a bit harder to clean afterwards with wet food.
      - Get a round bowl and fill it with one layer of golf balls to the point that they are end to end in the bowl and do not have any large gaps.
      - Pour your cat's food over the golf balls in the bowl so that it does not go any higher than 2/3 of the golf balls.

- The goal is that your cat will have to work harder to get the food out between the golf balls, and that will slow down their eating enough to minimize vomiting.
- If your cat is smart and figures out they can dig out the golf balls, then you can glue the golf balls to the bottom of the bowl using a non-toxic glue like Elmer's glue.
- **Food puzzle.** This will only work for dry food.
  - Get a large shallow food storage container that is about 1-2 feet across and about 2-4 inches deep.
  - Cut one hole in the top off to one side that is just big enough for your cat's head to fit comfortably through. Cut several smaller cylindrical holes in the top that are just big enough for your cat's paw to fit through comfortably.
  - Put the dry food in the container, and shake it to the end furthest away from the hole for your cat's head.
  - The goal is that your cat will have to bat the food over to where his head can fit in to eat it.
  - If your cat is smart and figures they can just push it around to move the food, while it may still work, you can also put Velcro on the bottom of the container and put it on a carpeted surface to minimize your cat's ability to move it.
  - You can also purchase commercially made food puzzles from some pet stores and online pet catalogs.
- **Giving frequent small meals.** If you are home all day, or if you are able to purchase the type of programmable feeder that can release up to nine feedings a day, then you can just give your cat very small meals six or more times a day.
- **Reduce food competition.** If you have more than one cat, and if it seems like the reason that your cat is trying to eat so fast is that they are eating it before the other cat can get it, then reduce the competition.
  - Try feeding your cats in separate bowls in separate areas of the room.
  - If the above does not work, then try putting several food bowls in different parts of the house, so your cat always has access to one that the other cat is not around.

Some cats are just more prone to vomiting. But, if your cat is vomiting more than once a week, then the stomach acids are going to start causing damage to your cat's mouth and esophagus. Or, if your cat is vomiting just liquid with no food or hair in it, then that is also a concern, and we recommend bringing your cat in for us to find the cause.

If you have any questions regarding any of the above, please feel free to contact us at All Feline Hospital at 402-467-2711 or [info@allfelinehospital.com](mailto:info@allfelinehospital.com).